

Filed for intro on 01/20/2000

HOUSE BILL 2217

By Tidwell

AN ACT to name a bridge in Wayne County in honor of Judge Russ Davidson and the late Mae Tom Davidson.

WHEREAS, from time to time, this General Assembly has named highways and bridges in honor of those outstanding citizens who during their lifetimes distinguished themselves as invaluable assets to their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, Judge James Russ Davidson and the late Mae Tom Whitby Davidson were most assuredly two such exemplary public servants; and

WHEREAS, James Russ Davidson and Mae Tom Whitby first met when they were co-workers in the office of the legendary T.B. Garth, Wayne County Agricultural Extension Agent, during the Depression; and

WHEREAS, after a short courtship, the couple was joined in holy matrimony in 1935 and their blissful union subsequently produced three children: Gene, who is a pharmacist and served ably in this General Assembly from 1975 to 1979; Sibyl, who serves with distinction as the Chief Executive Officer of the Wayne County Bank; and Barbara, who is a devoted homemaker; and

WHEREAS, in 1936, Russ Davidson was elected to serve as Justice of the Peace for the 2nd Civil District of Wayne County; he was the youngest person ever elected to this office in Wayne County and served with distinction until 1942; and

WHEREAS, during World War II, Russ Davidson patriotically served his country by working on several construction projects for the government; after the war, he resumed farming and did carpentry work; and

WHEREAS, from 1956-66, he served with acumen and alacrity as the manager of the Wayne Farmers Cooperative; and

WHEREAS, in 1966, Russ Davidson was elected to the first of his two terms as County Executive of Wayne County; from 1966-1974, he managed the governmental affairs of his home county with the utmost ability, intelligence, dedication and integrity, earning the admiration and respect of his fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Judge Davidson then served one term as the Election Registrar of Wayne County before retiring in 1978; and

WHEREAS, during the Depression, Mae Tom Whitby helped to support her family by working as a secretary with the Federal Land Bank; and

WHEREAS, after marrying Judge Davidson, she was a devoted homemaker and mother who also worked outside the home and was very active in civic affairs; and

WHEREAS, an early advocate for universal health care insurance, Mrs. Davidson also successfully lobbied the Wayne County Court to partially fund the salary of a Home Demonstration Agent to assist homemakers during the Depression; she also helped to organize Home Demonstration Clubs throughout Wayne County; and

WHEREAS, she served with distinction as President of the Frank Hughes School Parent Teachers Association in Clifton, and graciously donated her home for many birthday parties, 4-H Club meetings and church functions; these and her many other acts of kindness earned her a special place in the hearts of a whole generation of Wayne Countians; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, Judge and Mrs. Davidson helped found Wayne County Senior Citizens as an organization to provide social interaction and living assistance for senior citizens; and

WHEREAS, both Judge and Mrs. Davidson faithfully served the Lord and His mission as members of Philadelphia Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Judge Davidson served with acumen as Sunday School Superintendent, Church Deacon, Chairman of Deacons and Church Clerk, while Mrs. Davidson taught Sunday School, Church Training and Women's Missionary Society and served adroitly as the youth director for the Indian Creek Baptist Association; and

WHEREAS, Mae Tom Davidson retired from public service in the mid-1980s due to failing health and passed from this life to a far better existence on November 1, 1998; even at the end of her life, her greatest desire was to help others; and

WHEREAS, together, Judge and Mrs Davidson established an indelible legacy of compassionate and capable public service that present and future generations would do well to emulate; and

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that a certain bridge in Wayne County should bear their names in honor of their many good deeds and sacrifices in service of their fellow citizens; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the bridge that spans Hardin Creek on U.S. Highway 64 in Wayne County approximately one-quarter (1/4) mile west of such highway's junction with State Route 114 is hereby designated as the "Mae Tom and Judge Russ Davidson Memorial Bridge" as a lasting tribute to these two remarkable public servants and human beings.

SECTION 2. The Department of Transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating such bridge as the "Mae Tom and Judge Russ Davidson Memorial Bridge".

SECTION 3. The erection of such directional signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.